

**CALIFORNIA WOMEN in AGRICULTURE**

May 22, 2006

**Via Facsimile
(202) 690-0102**

Docket Clerk
Fruit and Vegetable Programs
Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Stop 0243
Washington, D.C. 20250-0243

Re: Docket No. FV06-1290-1 PR (71 FR 20353, April 20, 2006)

Dear Sir/Madam:

California Women for Agriculture (CWA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Federal Register notice of April 20, 2006 (71 FR 20353), Agricultural Marketing Service's *Specialty Crop Block Grant Program; Notice of Request for Approval of a New Information Collection*.

CWA's membership is comprised of growers as well as consumers. Our Los Angeles Chapter is made up entirely of consumers – interested in the safe, reliable production of a healthy food supply. Other CWA members include professionals in such fields as banking, law, business, regulatory agencies, sales, politics, communications, education, and community leadership. In fact, there are some legislators who are members of CWA. CWA has actively been involved in educational and legislative issues for over 25 years.

California specialty crop growers compete daily against foreign growers who are heavily subsidized and face comparatively less environmental regulation. The Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-465) was developed to assist the U.S. specialty crop industry in becoming more competitive in the globalized market. CWA believes that Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004 (SCCA) funds can greatly benefit specialty crop growers by increasing U.S. agricultural exports and research and technology developments and is very supportive of the specialty crop block grant program.

California agriculture is a \$27.6 billion industry that produces 350 crop and livestock commodities. It is very important to CWA that the SCCA and similarly

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Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

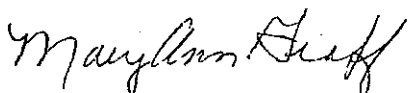
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structured programs are designed to include maximum flexibility. CWA believes each state's department of agriculture is best equipped to deal with the competitiveness issues facing its industry and should be enabled to manage the block grants as they see fit.

Additionally, CWA is particularly concerned about the priority granted to fresh market specialty crops. CWA believes the intent of the SCCA was to allow for broad participation for all forms of specialty crops; both fresh and processed. Many California producers grow for both fresh and processed markets. In fact, the processed market provides many growers with an additional marketing outlet as a segment of a crop intended for fresh market may not meet the minimum grade standards for the fresh market.

Respectfully,



Mary Ann Graff
CWA State President